

**STATE OF MAINE
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, CONSERVATION AND
FORESTRY**

Division of Agricultural Resource Development

RFP NUMBER: # 201209382

**RFP TITLE: Maine Farms for the Future Program -Round 12
Phase 1: Business Plan Development**

RFP COORDINATOR: Stephanie Gilbert, Farm Viability & Farmland Protection Specialist
Room 314, Deering Building, 90 Blossom Lane, 28 SHS, Augusta, ME 04333-0028
Tel: 207-287-7520 e-mail: Stephanie.gilbert@maine.gov Fax: 207-287-5576

From the time this RFP is issued until award notification is made, all contact with the State regarding this RFP must be made through the aforementioned RFP Coordinator. No other person / State employee is empowered to make binding statements regarding this RFP. Violation of this provision may lead to disqualification from the bidding process, at the State's discretion.

Deadline for Submitted Questions: Thursday, September 27, 5:00 PM local time

Submit written questions via email, fax or regular mail to:

Stephanie Gilbert, Farm Viability & Farmland Protection Specialist
28 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333-0028
e-mail: Stephanie.gilbert@maine.gov fax: 207-287-5576

Bidders' Conference:

Tuesday, October 2, 2012, 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM local time

Room 319, Deering Building
90 Blossom Lane
Augusta, ME

Proposals Due: Tuesday, October 16th, 2012, not later than 2:00 PM local time

Submit Proposals to:

Division of Purchases
Burton M. Cross Building, 111 Sewall Street, 4th Floor
9 State House Station
Augusta ME 04333-0009

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Public Notice

**State of Maine
Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry
Public Notice for RFP # 201209382**

Maine Farms for the Future Program – Round 12 – Phase 1 Business Plan Development

The State of Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, Division of Agricultural Resource Development has a requirement for business plan development and investment support as authorized through the Maine Farms for the Future Program (Title 7, Chapter 10-B). In accordance with State procurement practices, the Department is hereby announcing the publication of a Request for Proposals (RFP) # 201209382 for the purchase of the aforementioned services.

A copy of the RFP can be obtained by contacting the Department's RFP Coordinator for this project: Stephanie Gilbert, Farm Viability and Farmland Protection Specialist. The RFP Coordinator can be reached at the following email address: Stephanie.Gilbert@Maine.gov, or mailing address: Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, Maine Farms for the Future Program – Room 314, 28 SHS, Augusta, ME, 04333-0028. The Department encourages all interested vendors to obtain a copy of the RFP and submit a competitive proposal.

The deadline for submitted questions is Thursday, September 27, 5:00 p.m. local time. Submit questions to Stephanie.Gilbert@Maine.gov, or mailing address: Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, Maine Farms for the Future Program – Room 314, 28 SHS, Augusta, ME, 04333-0028.

A Bidders' Conference will be held at the Department Offices on Tuesday, October 2, 2012, from 10:00AM to 12:00PM, in Room 319 of the Deering Building located at 90 Blossom Lane, Augusta, Maine.

Proposals must be submitted to the State of Maine Division of Purchases, located at the Burton M. Cross Office Building, 111 Sewall Street, 4th Floor, 9 State House Station, Augusta, Maine, 04333-0009. Proposals must be submitted by 2:00PM, local time, on Tuesday, October 16th, 2012, when they will be opened at the Division of Purchases' aforementioned address. Proposals not received at the Division of Purchases' aforementioned address by the aforementioned deadline will not be considered for contract award.

State of Maine - Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry
RFP # 201209382
Maine Farms for the Future Program–Round 12: Business Plan Development

PART I INTRODUCTION

A. Purpose and Background

The Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry (“Department”) is seeking proposals to provide grants to eligible farms seeking to develop a detailed business plan that involves changes in the farm’s operation to increase the vitality of the farm as defined in this Request for Proposals (RFP) document. Per the Rules Governing the Maine Farms for the Future Program, ‘vitality’ means a maintainable increase in the farm’s long-term profitability and net worth. It is important to note that only the farms that are selected for Phase 1, and that complete their business plan by April 15, 2014, will be eligible to compete for Phase 2 investment support – a grant and/or a reduced-interest loan rate – to help implement the changes described in the business plan.

This document provides instructions for submitting proposals, the procedure and criteria by which the Provider(s) will be selected, and the contractual terms which will govern the relationship between the State of Maine (“State”) and the awarded Bidder(s).

Need for Services:

The Maine Farms for the Future Program seeks farm business owners (Bidders) who want to make changes in their production and financial management practices and invest in infrastructure, equipment and farmland. All awarded Bidders shall utilize Phase 1 grant funds to obtain business planning training, and retain professional agricultural service providers to assist with researching and writing a business plan that will increase the long-term profitability and net worth of the farm. The written business plan must be completed by April 15, 2014.

Eligible “Bidders” must:

- 1) Own and operate a farm business that has been producing agricultural products commercially in the State of Maine for at least two (2) years at the time of application.
- 2) Submit documentation of gross and net farm income, expenses, net worth and farm debt, including IRS Schedule F tax forms.

NOTE: To be eligible for Phase 1 (and Phase 2) funding, the farmland owner must be the applicant. While a lease gives you an interest in property, it does not guarantee a right of ownership in that property. You alone are not eligible. If the landowner is willing to enter into a joint ownership or long-term lease (10 year) agreement with you, AND she/he is willing to co-sign the Phase 1 application, AND both lessee and the landowner understand that both would be the recipients of the grant funds AND mutually agree to sign the grant contract stating who will do the grant work, THEN you could become eligible.

The Department maintains a mission of fostering opportunities for the agriculture community and promoting stewardship of Maine. Since enacted by the Maine Legislature in 1999, the Maine Farms for the Future Program has addressed three of the Department’s seven goals; to make the State a leader in innovative approaches to profitability; to create opportunities for Maine citizens to succeed in agriculture; and to promote the stewardship of Maine’s natural resources.

Since 2000 the Maine Farms for the Future Program has improved the viability and vitality of 208 Maine farms statewide. It has reduced the risk that nearly 27,000 acres of farmland would be converted out of agricultural

use; and every \$1 of the Program's Phase 2 - Investment Support grant has leveraged another \$4.5 in farm business owner investment in the form cash, loans, USDA cost-share programs and other public and private grant programs.

B. General Provisions

1. Issuance of this RFP does not commit the Department to issue an award or to pay expenses incurred by a Bidder in the preparation of a response to this RFP. This includes attendance at personal interviews or other meetings and software or system demonstrations, where applicable.
2. All proposals should adhere to the instructions and format requirements outlined in this RFP and all written supplements and amendments (such as the Summary of Questions and Answers), issued by the Department. Proposals are to follow the format and respond to all questions and instructions specified below in the "Proposal Submission Requirements and Evaluation" section of this RFP.
3. Bidders shall take careful note that in evaluating a proposal submitted in response to this RFP, the Department shall only consider materials provided in the proposal, information obtained through interviews/presentations (if any), and internal Departmental information of previous contract history with the Bidder (if any). The proposal shall be signed by a person authorized to legally bind the Bidder and shall contain a statement that the proposal and the pricing contained therein will remain valid and binding for a period of 180 days from the date and time of the bid opening.
4. The RFP and the selected Bidder's proposal, including all appendices or attachments, will be incorporated in the final contract.
5. Following announcement of an award decision, all submissions in response to this RFP will be considered public records available for public inspection pursuant to the State of Maine Freedom of Access Act (FOAA) (1 M.R.S. §§ 401 *et seq.*). If a Bidder submits materials that it claims are confidential because they are not "public records" pursuant to FOAA, the Bidder must (1) conspicuously and precisely designate those particular portions of its materials as "confidential" and (2) provide the specific statutory or other legal basis that excepts the designated materials from FOAA's definition of "public record." (See 1 M.R.S. § 402; <http://www.maine.gov/foaa/law/exceptions.htm>.) A Bidder's confidential designation does not ensure nondisclosure of the material; the State shall determine whether submitted materials are "public records."
6. The Department, at its sole discretion, reserves the right to recognize and waive minor informalities and irregularities found in proposals received in response to this RFP.
7. The State of Maine Division of Purchases reserves the right to authorize other Departments to use the contract(s) resulting from this RFP, if it is deemed to be beneficial for the State to do so.

C. Eligibility to Submit Bids

Private for-profit companies, owned by individuals, partners or corporations, that grow or produce agricultural products for commercial sale, and have all State of Maine certification or licensure required for the particular type of agricultural operation (Nutrient Management Plan, Licensed Commercial Kitchen, Milk License, etc) are invited to submit bids in response to this Request for Proposals.

D. Contract Term

The Department is seeking a cost-efficient proposal to provide services, as defined in this RFP, for the anticipated contract period defined in the table below. Please note that the dates below are estimated and may be adjusted as necessary in order to comply with all procedural requirements associated with this RFP and the contracting process. The actual contract start date will be established by a completed and approved contract.

Contract Renewal: Following the initial term of the contract, the Department may opt to renew the contract for one renewal periods of one year each, subject to continued availability of funding and satisfactory performance.

The term of the anticipated contract, resulting from this RFP, is defined as follows:

Period	Start Date	End Date
Initial Period of Performance	11/15/2012	04/15/2014
Renewal Period #1	05/01/2014	05/01/2016
Renewal Period #2	NA	NA
Renewal Period #3	NA	NA

E. Number of Awards

The Department anticipates making multiple (8-10) award(s) as a result of this RFP process. As required by Title 7, Chapter 10-B and the Program Rules (Chapter 36), a five-member Review Panel, shall award business plan development grants in accordance with Maine Farms for the Future Phase 1 – Business Plan Development Selection Policy and Scoring System Guidance. Whenever possible, the Panel shall award grants to applicants (Bidders) representing diverse agricultural enterprises and geographic areas of the State.

PART II SCOPE OF SERVICES

The contract with the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry will require the “Provider” (farm business owner) to work independently on their farm, attend training and conferences as desired or needed, meet with experts and consultants, and participate in meetings at the Department’s offices in Augusta, Maine, in order to research and write a business plan that addresses the Provider’s “Idea for Change” as described in the Maine Farms for the Future Program – Phase 1 Business Plan Development APPLICATION FORM (Appendix A) and further detailed during the contract.

- 1) Work with Department staff who may need visit the farm to ensure that the farm is in compliance with any/all required licensing, certification and best management practices relating to the type of farm operation.
- 2) Take a business planning course from a certified entity teaching such courses in Maine or on the internet.
- 3) Work with a professional business counselor to develop a written business plan consistent with the Maine Farms for the Future Program - Business Planning Guide 2012-2014.
- 4) If needed and desired, purchase financial management software and training on the use of such.
- 5) Work with Department staff to identify and retain/hire professional agricultural service providers, consultants or specialists who might provide technical assistance with recommendations, reports, estimates, financial data analysis, production analysis, market research, product development and testing, drawings, site plans, and other inventories and technical information relevant to the “Idea for Change”.
- 6) Should any other expense, not described above, and explicitly related to the process of researching and writing a business plan for the ‘Idea for Change’ become necessary, the Provider shall notify the Department in writing and shall obtain prior written approval from the Department before incurring the expense.

7) Submit Progress Reports, Invoices and/or Requests for Advance to the Department on forms provided by the Department (Appendices E and F. Itemize and attach all invoices, receipts and/or purchase orders required by these forms.

9) Arrange for Department staff to visit the farm and review the key elements of the idea for change and the draft business plan before December 15, 2012.

10) If the Provider fails to fulfill the contractual obligations, the Department and Provider shall mutually agree to terminate the contract, and depending upon the work performed, the Provider may be required to return all or a portion of funds expended through this contract to the Department.

PART III KEY RFP EVENTS

A. Timeline of Key RFP Events

Event Name	Event Date and Time
Bidders' Conference – Call 287-3491 ahead to get on attendee security list.	10/02/12, 10:00 AM–12:00 PM
Due Date for Receipt of Written Questions	09/27/12 at 5:00pm, local time
Due Date for Receipt of Proposals	10/16/12 at 2:00pm, local time
Estimated Contract Start Date (subject to change)	11/15/12

B. Bidders Conference

The Department will sponsor a Bidders' Conference concerning this RFP. **The Bidders' Conference will be held on Tuesday, October 2, 2012, 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM, in Room 319 of the Deering Building, located at 90 Blossom Lane, Augusta, ME.** You must call 287-3491 ahead of time to get your name on the attendee security list. Enter the building on the ground floor at the north end of the building. After entering the first (outer) door, follow the instructions posted on the wall to obtain security clearance to enter the second (inner) door. Directional signs to the 3rd floor and Room 319 will be posted.

The purpose of the Bidders' Conference is to answer and/or field questions, clarify for potential Bidders any aspect of the RFP requirements that may be necessary and provide supplemental information to assist potential Bidders in submitting responses to the RFP. Although attendance at the Bidders' Conference is not mandatory, it is strongly encouraged that interested Bidders attend.

C. Questions

1. General Instructions

- It is the responsibility of each Bidder to examine the entire RFP and to seek clarification in writing if the Bidder does not understand any information or instructions.
- Questions regarding the RFP must be submitted in writing and received by the RFP Coordinator as soon as possible but no later than 5:00 PM local time September 27th, 2012, as shown above.
- Questions may be submitted by e-mail, fax or regular mail. If faxed, please be sure to include a cover sheet addressed to the RFP Coordinator listed on the cover of this RFP, and indicate the number of pages sent. The Department assumes no liability for assuring accurate/complete fax or e-mail transmission and receipt.
- Include a heading with the RFP Number and Title. Be sure to refer to the page number and paragraph within this RFP relevant to the question presented for clarification.
- Send written questions to the RFP Coordinator listed on the cover page of this RFP document.

2. **Written Questions Due:** Written questions must be received **by the RFP Coordinator no later than 5:00 p.m. local time on September 27th**, as shown in the timeline above. No questions will be accepted after this time.

3. **Summary of Questions and Answers**

Responses to all substantive and relevant questions will be compiled in writing and distributed to all registered, interested persons by e-mail no later than seven (7) calendar days prior to the proposal due date. **Only those answers issued in writing by the RFP Coordinator will be considered binding.** The Department reserves the right to answer or not answer any question received.

D. Submitting the Proposal

1. **Proposals due:** Proposals must be received **no later than 2:00 PM local time, on Tuesday, October 16th, 2012**, at which point they will be opened. Proposals received after the 2:00 p.m. deadline will be rejected without exception.

2. **Mailing/Delivery Instructions**

PLEASE NOTE: The proposals are not to be submitted to the RFP Coordinator at the requesting Department. The official delivery site is the State of Maine Division of Purchases. The submission address is shown in the box below.

- a. Only proposals received at the official delivery site prior to the stated deadline will be considered. Bidders submitting proposals are responsible for allowing adequate time for delivery. Proposals received after the 2:00 p.m. deadline will be rejected without exception. Postmarks do not count and fax or electronic mail transmissions of proposals are not permitted unless expressly stated in this RFP. Any method of hardcopy delivery is acceptable, such as US Mail, in-person delivery by Bidder, or use of private courier services.
- b. The Bidder must send its proposal in a sealed package including **one (1) original and five (5) copies** of the complete proposal. Please clearly label the original. One electronic copy of the proposal must also be provided on CD or flash drive with the complete narrative and attachments in MS Word format. Any attachments that cannot be submitted in MS Word format may be submitted as Adobe (.pdf) files.
- c. Address each package as follows (and be sure to include the Bidder's full business name and address as well as the RFP number and title):

Bidder's Name
Return Address

**Division of Purchases
Burton M. Cross Building, 4th Floor
111 Sewall Street
9 State House Station
Augusta ME 04333-0009**

Regarding: RFP # 201209382

RFP Title: Maine Farms for the Future Program – Round 12- Phase 1: Business Plan Development

PART IV PROPOSAL SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

The Bidder's proposal must follow the outline for format and content below. Failure to use the outline specified in this section or to respond to all questions and instructions throughout this document may result in the proposal being disqualified as non-responsive or receiving a reduced score. The Department and its evaluation team for this RFP have sole discretion to determine whether a variance from the RFP specifications should result in either disqualification or reduction in scoring of a proposal. Rephrasing of the content provided in this RFP will, at best, be considered minimally responsive. The Department seeks detailed yet succinct responses that demonstrate the Bidder's experience and ability to perform the requirements specified throughout this document.

A. Proposal Format

1. For clarity, the proposal should be typed or printed into **Appendix A - APPLICATION FORM.** Please use a 12-point font.
2. Do not change pagination of the APPLICATION FORM. The complete proposal should be limited the APPLICATION FORM, the COST PROPOSAL FORM, REQUIRED FINANCIAL FORMS, AND ALL APPLICABLE ATTACHMENTS (certificates, licenses, etc). Pages provided beyond the aforementioned will not be considered during evaluation.
3. For clarity, the Bidder's Last Name and Farm Name should appear in the upper right corner of every page of the APPLICATION FORM.
4. The Bidder may not provide additional attachments beyond those specified in the RFP for the purpose of extending their response. Any material exceeding the proposal limit will not be considered in rating the proposals and will not be returned. Bidders shall not include brochures or other promotional material with their proposals. Additional materials will not be considered part of the proposal and will not be evaluated.
5. All information should be presented as described in this RFP.
6. It is the responsibility of the Bidder to provide all information requested in the RFP package at the time of submission. Failure to provide information requested in this RFP may, at the discretion of the Department's evaluation review team, result in a lower rating for the incomplete sections and may result in the proposal being disqualified for consideration.

B. Proposal Contents

Part 1 – The **APPLICATION FORM** provided as Appendix A and the **COST PROPOSAL FORM** provided as Appendix B.

Part 2 – Copies of the farm's **IRS Schedule F Tax Forms for 2010 & 2011** &/or Financial Records for 2010 & 2011. Attach after Part 1.

Part 3 – Copies of the farm's **current certificates, certifications or licenses**

Copies of the farm's - certification (i.e. organic), certified plans (i.e. nutrient management plan), licenses (maple syrup producer, bakery, home food processor, mobile vendor, etc.). Attach after Part 2.

PART V PROPOSAL EVALUATION AND SELECTION

Evaluation of the submitted proposals shall be accomplished as follows:

A. Evaluation Process - General Information

1. An evaluation team, comprised of qualified reviewers, will judge the merits of the proposals received in accordance with the criteria defined in the RFP, and in accordance with the most advantageous cost and economic impact considerations (where applicable) for the State.
2. Officials responsible for making decisions on the selection of a contractor shall ensure that the selection process accords equal opportunity and appropriate consideration to all who are capable of meeting the specifications. The goals of the evaluation process are to ensure fairness and objectivity in review of the proposals and to ensure that the contract is awarded to the Bidder whose proposal best satisfies the criteria of the RFP at a reasonable/competitive cost.
3. The Department reserves the right to communicate and/or schedule interviews/presentations with Bidders if needed to obtain clarification of information contained in the proposals received, and the Department may revise the scores assigned in the initial evaluation to reflect those communications and/or interviews/presentations. The Department reserves the right to make video or audio recordings of any applicable interview/presentation process. Interviews/presentations are not required, and changes to proposals will not be permitted during any interview/presentation process. Therefore, Bidders should submit proposals that present their costs and other requested information as clearly and completely as possible.

B. Scoring Weights and Process

Scoring Weights: The score will be based on a 100 point scale and will measure the degree to which each proposal meets the following criteria.

Management Capacity..... 20 points

Rules - Chapter 36, Section 6.2.A. “*The **management capacity** of the applicant based upon the number of years farming and other related experience and training; the applicant’s decision making authority over the land and resources; and the applicant’s statement of purpose and readiness to apply to the Program.*”

- a. Does the farmer demonstrate the knowledge, experience and capability to plan and implement changes?
- b. Will business planning move this farm forward?
- c. Will the farmer make good use of business planning process?

Quality of the Ideas for Changes..... 25 points

Rules - Chapter 36, Section 6.2.B. “*The ability of the applicant to identify and propose **an idea that will make a fundamental change** on the farm that will improve its viability, profitability, and capacity to pay back its debt through the present or future cash flow of the business, while also attempting to make farming the primary source of the applicant’s income.*”

- a. Has the applicant described areas within the current farm enterprises that need improvement, and/or identified potential strategies for change towards profitability
- b. What is the degree of transformation that the applicant is considering?
- c. Does the proposed idea appear to have potential to positively impact farm vitality?
- d. Does the proposed idea directly rely on farm production for its success?
- e. Does the applicant intend to remain in farming?

Farm Financial Health and Ability to Transform..... 25 points

Rules – Chapter 36, Section 6.2.C. *“The ability of the applicant to describe the **current financial condition of the Farm Business**, including the current debt load relative to earnings, the assets and liabilities, and whether the debt load and access to new assets can be managed with the proposed idea for change.”*

- a. Has the applicant attempted to provide clear information about gross & net income (current year and past 1 or 2 years)?
- b. Does farmer clearly describe the current financial condition of the business and identify debts and asset? Does farmer describe goals and attitude regarding debt and managing debt?
- c. How does debt level affect plans for change?

Physical Resource Base 20 points

Rules – Chapter 36, Section 6.2.D. *“The **suitability and productivity of the farmland** for its intended agricultural use, the **physical condition of buildings and equipment**, and **other assets needed** to maintain and increase productivity of the Farm Business.”*

- a. Is the land good for agriculture and/or the proposed idea for changes? Are the soils classified by the USDA NRCS as Prime, Statewide Important or Locally Significant?
- b. Is the land suitable for changes/expansion in crops, pasture, or whatever the idea entails?
- c. Does the building and equipment list suggest that business planning could help transform the farm’s physical resources toward long-term viability? (*i.e. Does the building and equipment list suggest that help is needed and would make a difference?*)

Other Conditions 10 points

Rules – Chapter 36, Section 6.2.E. *“The degree of **development pressure on the farm** operation, the **percentage of the operated farmland** that is **owned** by the applicant, and the **potential environmental and community economic development benefits** derived from the proposed changed.”*

- a. What is the degree of development pressure on the acreage? Is there a high number of acres owned and/or operated?
- b. Will the idea help the farm be in a position to provide more employment opportunities and/or support regional agricultural infrastructure?
- c. Is there an environmental benefit from the proposed idea?
- d. Will the idea help the farm become/remain important to the local community?

Scoring Process: The Commissioner appoints a 5-member Review Panel to review and score all proposals.

1. The Review Panel will use a consensus approach to evaluate the bids. Members of the review team will not score the proposals individually but instead will arrive at a consensus as to assignment of points on each category of each proposal. The contract award(s) will be made to the Bidder(s) receiving the highest number of evaluation points, based upon the proposals’ satisfaction of the criteria established in the RFP.
2. All Round 12 – Phase 1 grants will award \$6,000 per farm. These funds will be disbursed as follows: approximately 2/3rds of this amount will be disbursed to the Bidder (farm) as its planning activities are described in a Progress Report form (Appendix E) and expenses are itemized on the Invoice for Reimbursement form with receipts attached (Appendix F), or itemized on the Request Advance form (Appendix G) with purchase orders, cost estimates, etc. attached. Approximately 1/3rd of the amount will be used to retain the services of a certified business counselor and disbursed through a separate state approved contract for business counseling services.
3. No costs related to the preparation of the proposal for this RFP or to the negotiation of the contract with the Department may be included in the proposal. Only costs to be incurred after the contract effective date that are specifically related to the implementation or operation of contracted services may be included.

4. **Scoring the Cost Proposal:** The total cost proposed for conducting all the functions specified in this RFP will be assigned a score according to a mathematical formula. The lowest bid will be awarded 25 points. Proposals with higher bids values will be awarded proportionately fewer points calculated in comparison with the lowest bid.

The scoring formula is:

$$(\text{lowest submitted cost proposal} / \text{cost of proposal being scored}) \times 25 = \text{pro-rated score}$$

No Best and Final Offers: The State of Maine will not seek a best and final offer (BAFO) from any Bidder in this procurement process. All Bidders are expected to provide their best value pricing with the submission of their proposal.

5. Negotiations

The Department reserves the right to negotiate with the successful Bidder to finalize a contract at the same rate or cost of service as presented in the selected proposal. Such negotiations may not significantly vary the content, nature or requirements of the proposal or the Department's Request for Proposals to an extent that may affect the price of goods or services requested. The Department reserves the right to terminate contract negotiations with a selected respondent who submits a proposed contract significantly different from the proposal they submitted in response to the advertised RFP. In the event that an acceptable contract cannot be negotiated with the highest ranked Bidder, the Department may withdraw its award and negotiate with the next-highest ranked Bidder, and so on, until an acceptable contract has been finalized. Alternatively, the Department may cancel the RFP, at its sole discretion.

C. Selection and Award

1. The final decision regarding the award of the contract will be made by representatives of the Department subject to approval by the State Purchases Review Committee.
2. Notification of contractor selection or non-selection will be made in writing by the Department.
3. Issuance of this RFP in no way constitutes a commitment by the State of Maine to award a contract, to pay costs incurred in the preparation of a response to this request, or to pay costs incurred in procuring or contracting for services, supplies, physical space, personnel or any other costs incurred by the Bidder.
4. The Department reserves the right to reject any and all proposals or to make multiple awards.

D. Appeal of Contract Awards

Any person aggrieved by the award decision that results from this RFP may appeal the decision to the Director of the Bureau of General Services in the manner prescribed in 5 MRSA § 1825-E and 18-554 Code of Maine Rules, Chapter 120 (found here: <http://www.maine.gov/purchases/policies/120.shtml>). The appeal must be in writing and filed with the Director of the Bureau of General Services, 9 State House Station, Augusta, Maine, 04333-0009 within 15 calendar days of receipt of notification of contract award.

If this RFP results in the creation of a pre-qualified or pre-approved list of vendors, then the appeal procedures mentioned above are available upon the original determination of that vendor list, but not during subsequent competitive procedures involving only the pre-qualified or pre-approved list participants.

PART VI CONTRACT ADMINISTRATION AND CONDITIONS

A. Contract Document

1. The successful Bidder will be required to execute a contract in the form of a State of Maine Agreement to Purchase Services (BP54). A list of applicable Riders is as follows:

Rider A: Specification of Work to be Performed

Rider B: Method of Payment and Other Provisions

Rider C: Exceptions to Rider B

Rider D: Expenses allowed under the Agreement

Rider E: Not Applicable

Rider G: Identification of Country in Which Contracted Work Will Be Performed

The complete set of standard BP54 contract documents may be found on the Division of Purchases website at the following link: <http://www.maine.gov/purchases/info/forms/BP54.doc>

Other forms and contract documents commonly used by the State can be found on the Division of Purchases website at the following link: <http://www.maine.gov/purchases/info/forms.shtml>

2. Allocation of funds is final upon successful negotiation and execution of the contract, subject to the review and approval of the State Purchases Review Committee. Contracts are not considered fully executed and valid until approved by the State Purchases Review Committee and funds are encumbered. No contract will be approved based on an RFP which has an effective date less than fourteen (14) calendar days after award notification to Bidders. (Referenced in the regulations of the Department of Administrative and Financial Services, Chapter 110, § 3(B)(i): <http://www.maine.gov/purchases/policies/110.shtml>)

This provision means that a contract cannot be effective until at least 14 days after award notification.

3. The Department estimates having a contract in place by November 15, 2012. The State recognizes, however, that the actual contract effective date depends upon completion of the RFP process, date of formal award notification, length of contract negotiation, and preparation and approval by the State Purchases Review Committee. Any appeals to the Department's award decision(s) may further postpone the actual contract effective date, depending upon the outcome. The contract effective date may need to be adjusted, if necessary, to comply with mandated requirements.
4. In providing services and performing under the contract, the successful Bidder shall act independently and not as an agent of the State of Maine.

B. Standard State Agreement Provisions

1. Agreement Administration

- a. Following the award, an Agreement Administrator from the Department will be appointed to assist with the development and administration of the contract and to act as administrator during the entire contract period. Department staff will be available after the award to consult with the successful Bidder in the finalization of the contract.
- b. In the event that an acceptable contract cannot be negotiated with the highest ranked Bidder, the Department may withdraw its award and negotiate with the next-highest ranked Bidder, and so on, until an acceptable contract has been finalized. Alternatively, the Department may cancel the RFP, at its sole discretion.

2. Payments and Other Provisions

The State anticipates paying the Contractor on the basis of net 30 payment terms, upon the receipt of an accurate and acceptable invoice. An invoice will be considered accurate and acceptable if it contains a reference to the State of Maine contract number, contains correct pricing information relative to the contract, and provides any required supporting documents, as applicable, and any other specific and agreed-upon requirements listed within the contract that results from this RFP.

PART VII LIST OF RFP APPENDICES

Appendix A – APPLICATION FORM – Part 1 of Proposal

Appendix B – COST PROPOSAL FORM – Part 1 of Proposal

Appendix C – Overview Eligibility, Farm Suitability, Selection Criteria and Scoring System

Appendix D – Frequently Asked Questions

Appendix E – SAMPLE Progress Report, Invoice and Request for Advance Forms

PART 1

Appendix A - APPLICATION FORM

Last Name: _____
Farm Name: _____

RFP # 201209382

RFP Title: Maine Farms for the Future Program – Round 12 Phase 1- Business Plan Development

For the period between November 15, 2012 and April 15, 2014

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

To be eligible for Phase 1 of the Farms for the Future Program you must:

- i. Own and operate a Farm Business* that has been producing agricultural products commercially in the State of Maine for at least two (2) years.
- ii. Own your farmland or be a partner or shareholder in a legal entity that owns the farmland or have a 10-year lease. If you've only recently purchased your farmland, you must have at least two (2) years' experience operating a Farm Business elsewhere in Maine.
- iii. Submit your IRS Schedule F tax forms or other documentation showing farm income and expenses for years 2010 and 2011.

** Farm Business – means that the agricultural products grown or produced on a farm are being sold commercially and the farm has documentation of gross and net farm income, expenses, net worth and farm debt.*

Please note: There is no minimum acreage requirement for Phase 1 Business Planning. However, if you intend to apply for a Phase 2 Investment Support grant to implement your business plan, you must own at least 5 acres of land that is in agricultural use at the time of your Phase 2 application.

Section 1 – Farm & Land Information

We are looking for a clear picture of where you are now, your vision for your farm business AND your idea for change to improve farm vitality. The questions in this application guide you to give us the information we need. PLEASE TYPE OR PRINT CLEARLY & CONTAIN YOUR ANSWERS WITHIN THE SPACE PROVIDED.

1. Complete the chart below:

Name:		
Farm Name:		
Address:		
Town:	Zip:	County:
Home Phone:	Other Phone:	
Fax:	E-mail:	

2. Complete the chart below:

a. Total farmland acres owned:	d. What year did you purchase your land?
b. Total owned acres in production:	e. Additional acres you lease for your use:
c. What year did you begin farming this land?	g. Additional acres you lease to others:

3. Have you sold or donated a conservation easement on the farm acreage you own and operate?

YES NO

If you answered "yes," your eligibility for Phase 1 business plan development (this application) will not be affected, but you may not be eligible for a Phase 2 Investment Support grant.

4. Do you own your farmland or are you part of a legal entity that owns the farmland?

YES

NO

4a. Do you have full legal control and decision making authority over the land and resources that will be covered by your business plan?

YES, 100%

NO, not 100%

If you are less than 100% in control of the land or resources, please explain the circumstances of land ownership and decision-making authority (i.e. legal situations, legal structure of the farm, or family members/business partners with control of farm management decisions).

5. Describe your farmland based upon its physical features and soil classification.

Slope:
Directional Orientation:
Acres of Prime Farmland:
Acres of Farmland of Statewide Importance:
Acres of Farmland Soils of Local Importance*:

* Only Androscoggin, Kennebec, Sagadahoc and York Counties have designated the classification of Farmland Soils of Local Importance.

6. Please complete the charts below, to describe your farm infrastructure.

Equipment	Condition

Example: Tractor

Good

Buildings (type & size)	Condition

Example: Hoop house

Fair

7. Briefly describe your farm as you would to your customers - what you produce, who works on the farm, how many acres you farm, services or activities you provide for your customers.

7a. Number the products you grow for commercial sale in the order that they generate income for you, from greatest income generated (#1) to least.

<input type="checkbox"/> vegetables	<input type="checkbox"/> herbs	<input type="checkbox"/> beef	<input type="checkbox"/> micro-dairy
<input type="checkbox"/> berries	<input type="checkbox"/> ornamentals	<input type="checkbox"/> pigs	<input type="checkbox"/> fiber
<input type="checkbox"/> apples	<input type="checkbox"/> flowers	<input type="checkbox"/> sheep	<input type="checkbox"/> agritourism
<input type="checkbox"/> potatoes	<input type="checkbox"/> hay	<input type="checkbox"/> poultry	<input type="checkbox"/> other _____
<input type="checkbox"/> maple syrup	<input type="checkbox"/> grains	<input type="checkbox"/> eggs	<input type="checkbox"/> other _____
<input type="checkbox"/> honey	<input type="checkbox"/> milk (dairy cows)	<input type="checkbox"/> goats	<input type="checkbox"/> other _____

b. Additional notes on farm products, if applicable.

8. How would you describe your current customer base? (Check all that apply.)

<input type="checkbox"/> Family, friends, neighbors	<input type="checkbox"/> Farmer's Markets
<input type="checkbox"/> Community & region	<input type="checkbox"/> CSAs
<input type="checkbox"/> Statewide	<input type="checkbox"/> Buying Clubs
<input type="checkbox"/> National/International	<input type="checkbox"/> Your own Farm Stand or Farm Store
	<input type="checkbox"/> Other Farm Stands or Farm Stores
	<input type="checkbox"/> Other Small Stores
	<input type="checkbox"/> Large wholesale stores or distributors
	<input type="checkbox"/> Restaurants/Institutions
<input type="checkbox"/> Other _____	<input type="checkbox"/> One or two large contract-based customers or processors

9. How would you describe your anticipated future customer base? (Check all that apply.)

<input type="checkbox"/> Family, friends, neighbors	<input type="checkbox"/> Farmer's Markets
<input type="checkbox"/> Community & region	<input type="checkbox"/> CSAs
<input type="checkbox"/> Statewide	<input type="checkbox"/> Buying Clubs
<input type="checkbox"/> National/International	<input type="checkbox"/> Your own Farm Stand or Farm Store
	<input type="checkbox"/> Other Farm Stands or Farm Stores
	<input type="checkbox"/> Other Small Stores
	<input type="checkbox"/> Large wholesale stores or distributors
	<input type="checkbox"/> Restaurants/Institutions
<input type="checkbox"/> Other _____	<input type="checkbox"/> One or two large contract-based customers or processors

Section 2 – Farm Financial Information

10. What was your OVERALL gross and net profit from the farm in 2011?

a. Gross \$ _____ (your total revenues)

b. Net \$ _____ (your total revenues, minus your expenses)*

* We are looking for the amount of money left over after you pay all your farm expenses, including paid labor and/or salary, utilities, supplies, insurance, loans, depreciation, etc).

c. Are you paying yourself (or someone in your family) as part of those expenses? (circle one)

YES NO

Last Name: _____
Farm Name: _____

11. Complete the 3-year OVERALL gross and net profit chart below. Do your best to show the gross and net profit from 2010 through to 2012 for each of the CROPS or PRODUCTS you listed in Question #7a. Note the acres needed/used for each product, for each of the three years.

[illegible]

<i>Strawberries</i>	2	\$10,000	\$6,000	2.5	\$15,000	\$9,000	2.5	\$15,000	\$9,000
<i>Mixed veggies</i>	4	\$25,000	\$8,000	4	\$27,000	\$10,000	4	\$32,000	\$17,000

Additional notes on farm income, if necessary:

12. Please check which methods/people you currently use to keep track of your farm revenues and expenses. Check all that apply.

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> QuickBooks | <input type="checkbox"/> a hired bookkeeper |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Excel (or other spreadsheet) | <input type="checkbox"/> a hired accountant |
| <input type="checkbox"/> pencil, paper, & simple notebooks | <input type="checkbox"/> a friend or family member |
| <input type="checkbox"/> farm ledger books | <input type="checkbox"/> don't really keep track |
| <input type="checkbox"/> a shoebox of loose notes & receipts | <input type="checkbox"/> other |

13. How often do you bring your overall farm financial records up to date?

- ☐ Weekly ☐ Seasonally
☐ Monthly ☐ At tax time

14. Please identify any farm debt, including mortgages. If none, please state so.

[illegible]

\$9,000	Used tractor purchase	Farm Savings Bank	March 2020
---------	-----------------------	-------------------	------------

15. What is your perspective on farm debt and debt management? Please check one:

- ☐ Comfortable with some debt, when managed well
☐ Somewhat comfortable with debt
☐ Uncomfortable with debt, but not entirely opposed
☐ Avoid it at all costs

16. Would you like to maintain or change your debt situation? (Circle one)

If you circle "change" Please be specific about what you would like to change, and when....

Section 3 - Farm Personnel

17. On-farm family or household members employed on farm:

Name	Relationship	Full time or part time?

Mary Smith

Owner and spouse

Part time

18. Annual average number of non-household farm employees:

Full time _____

Part time _____

19. Annual average total payroll for non-household employees: \$ _____

20. Annual average number of farm apprentices or interns: _____

21. Annual average total of stipends for farm apprentices or interns: \$ _____

Room? YES / NO Board? YES / NO

22. Please explain if any key personnel & family members expect to transition into or away from farming in the next few years.

23. Do any farm household members have off-farm income? YES NO

24. If farm household members are earning income off the farm, please explain the role of the off-farm income in your farm business and family finances. (Check one choice and provide a brief note.)

- ☐ Off-farm income supports family expenses and the farm pays for itself with farm revenue
☐ Off-farm income supports family expenses and contributes a small amount to the farm
☐ Off-farm income supports the farm and family

Notes:

25. Please explain your goals to change or maintain the balance of off-farm and on-farm income.

26. Please describe how many years you have been farming, and your experience in and knowledge of farming. (production, management, marketing, training, education, personal background, etc.)

27. Please describe (if applicable) what else in your background contributes to your capability as a farm business manager, including your experience with planning and implementing changes.

Section 4 – Ideas for Change and Business Planning Goals

In this section, identify what needs improvement on the farm and whether you have identified any potential strategies for improvements.

28. What is the “big picture” for your farm? That is, what is your vision for your farm in the long term?

29. What do you believe needs to change about the farm or farm business to achieve that “big picture”?

30. What are your ideas or strategies for change to help make the farm more viable?

31. Why do you think that writing a business plan will help improve farm viability?

32. What are some specific questions about your farm that you would like to clarify in the business planning process? Try to put into words your questions or “unknowns” about your ideas for the farm.

Examples are:

- *Can these new ideas be done on my land?*
- *Are there enough customers?*
- *Am I actually making any money?*
- *What enterprises might I expand?*
- *Is this industry going anywhere?*
- *Who will take over for me when I retire?*

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____
- d. _____
- e. _____
- f. _____
- g. _____
- h. _____
- i. _____

33. What are some specific abilities or skills you are seeking from the business planning process? In particular, are there things that you just would not be able to accomplish without this assistance?

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bookkeeping or Recordkeeping | <input type="checkbox"/> Market assessment |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Diversification strategies | <input type="checkbox"/> Marketing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Energy use assessment | <input type="checkbox"/> Production management/efficiencies |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Explore business partnerships or models | <input type="checkbox"/> New product development |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Financial management/decision making | <input type="checkbox"/> Perspective of experts |
| <input type="checkbox"/> General planning skills | <input type="checkbox"/> Research |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Labor hiring and management | |

a. Additional skills and assistance sought:

Section 5 – Other Questions

34. Do you envision that your idea for change will help the farm provide more employment opportunities and/or support regional agricultural infrastructure?

YES NO If “YES”, briefly describe.

35. Do you envision that your ideas for change will help the farm protect or improve natural resources (water, soil, air)? **YES NO** If “YES”, briefly describe.

36. Do you envision that your ideas for change will enhance the farm’s importance to the local community (i.e. as a historic landmark, a community gathering place, an outlet for local products in an otherwise underserved area, a venue for agricultural education, etc.)

YES NO If “YES”, briefly describe.

37. Rate the development pressure* on your farmland.

Please circle: Low Moderate High

*Development Pressure means the potential of the Farm Business to be put out of business due to increasing development of non-compatible land uses near the farm. This includes, but is not limited to residential and industrial development, nuisance complaints, and loss of agricultural infrastructure in the vicinity of the farm or food business. These, and other non-compatible land uses create environmental, social, political or operational constraints on the farm operation and result in negative financial impacts on the Farm Business.

38. Business planning with Maine Farms for the Future is an intense and time consuming process. If you are selected, we will ask you to:

- *Discuss the future of your farm enterprise with your family and key employees*
- *Take classes to build business planning and financial management skills*
- *Work with your business counselor to assemble a financial history and make projections for the future*
- *Arrange & conduct meetings with farm consultants and advisors*
- *Conduct research on your own and with your consultants and advisors*
- *Visit other farms to talk with other farmers about their experiences*
- *Write and share drafts with the Department’s program administrator for constructive guidance and coaching*

38 a. Please identify the people from your farm who will take the lead in the process, and who else from the farm will be involved.

38b. Please explain how these folks will dedicate time and energy for the business planning process.

39. Attach a copy of your IRS Schedule F for years 2010 and 2011. If you did not file a Schedule F, you must submit other documentation showing the farm income and expenses for both 2010 and 2011.

____ **2010 & 2011 IRS Forms are attached** ____ **Other financial documentation is attached.**

40. By signing this APPLICATION, I/we understand that:

- € Phase 1 business planning is a grant to develop a written business plan for an **“idea or ideas for new changes” related to the farm business**. It is not a grant to fund current farm projects and operations.
- € If awarded a Phase 1 grant, a representative from the Department will meet visit the farm to conduct a field inspection and address questions regarding the program and contract.
- € Owners of awarded farms must attend three meetings in Augusta in mid-December 2012, late January 2013 and November 2013.
- € Awarded farms accept the responsibility to schedule all meetings with their business counselor, as well as other professional agricultural consultants might provide technical assistance.
- € Farms that do not fulfill the terms of the contract - to research and write a business plan - may be required to reimburse the Department for grant funds expended.

I/We agree that the information in this APPLICATION for RFP 201209382 is factual.
And I/we authorize a representative of the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry to conduct a field inspection of our farm in November or December 2012.

Signature of Owner(s)

Date _____
Date _____
Date _____
Date _____
Date _____

PART 1

Last Name: _____

Farm Name: _____

Appendix B - COST PROPOSAL FORM

State of Maine

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, CONSERVATION AND FORESTRY

RFP # 201209382

**RFP Title: Maine Farms for the Future Program – Round 12
Phase 1- Business Plan Development**

The undersigned has read Part IV, Sections A, B and C of this RFP and understands that all grants awarded will be capped at \$6,000 and disbursed as follows:

- A. \$4,000 to the Bidder in incremental amounts that are itemized on the attached Invoice for Reimbursement or Request Advance forms, further described on the attached Progress Report form and approved for payment by the Department;
- B. \$2,000 to the relevant Small Business Development Center in a contract that is reviewed and approved Purchases.

Bidder's Name: _____
(sign name)

Bidder's Name: _____
(print name)

Farm Name: _____
(print name)

THIS ENDS PART 1 OF THE RFP. TO COMPLETE YOUR RFP PROPERLY, YOU MUST ALSO ATTACH:

Part 2 – Copies of the farm's **IRS Schedule F Tax Forms for 2010 & 2011** &/or Financial Records for 2010 & 2011. Attach after Part 1.

Part 3 – Copies of the farm's **current certificates, certifications or licenses**

Copies of the farm's - certification (i.e. organic), certified plans (i.e. nutrient management plan), licenses (maple syrup producer, bakery, home food processor, mobile vendor, etc.). Attach after Part 2.

PROPOSALS MUST BE RECEIVED no later than 2:00 p.m. Tuesday, October 16, 2012.

- Incomplete or unsigned applications will not be accepted.
- No additional information or application materials will be accepted after the deadline.
- If necessary, after reviewing your application, a representative of the Department may contact you by telephone to clarify information provided in your application.

PLEASE NOTE: The proposals are not to be submitted to the RFP Coordinator at the requesting Department. **The official proposal submission site is the State of Maine Division of Purchases.** See address in box below.

- a. Only proposals received at the official delivery site prior to the stated deadline will be considered. Bidders submitting proposals are responsible for allowing adequate time for delivery. Proposals received after the 2:00 p.m. deadline will be rejected without exception. Postmarks do not count and fax or electronic mail transmissions of proposals are not permitted unless expressly stated in this RFP. Any method of hardcopy delivery is acceptable, such as US Mail, in-person delivery by Bidder, or use of private courier services.
- b. **The Bidder must send its proposal in a sealed package including one (1) original and five (5) copies of the complete proposal. Please clearly label the original. One electronic copy of the proposal must also be provided on CD or flash drive with the complete narrative and attachments in MS Word format.** Any attachments that cannot be submitted in MS Word format may be submitted as Adobe (.pdf) files.
- c. Address each package as follows, and be sure to include the Bidder's full business name and address as well as the RFP Number and RFP Title:

Bidder's Full Business Name
Bidder's Return Address

Division of Purchases
Burton M. Cross Building, 4th Floor
111 Sewall Street
9 State House Station
Augusta ME 04333-0009

Regarding RFP Number: # 201209382

RFP Title: Maine Farms for the Future Program – Round 12- Phase 1: Business Plan Development

Appendix C – Frequently Asked Questions

Maine Farms for the Future Program - Round 12 - Phase 1 Business Planning

Question 1

The Phase 1 eligibility requirements state that I must own and operate a Farm Business. We have several income streams on the farm, we rent rooms in the farmhouse, we rent the farm grounds for special events and we board horses. Are we eligible for Phase 1?

ANSWER 1- To be eligible for Phase 1 business planning, you must own a Farm Business, meaning that the agricultural products grown or produced on the farm are being sold commercially and the farm has documentation of gross and net farm income, expenses, net worth and farm debt. The Farm Business must have been producing agricultural products commercially in the State of Maine for at least two (2) years at the time of application. Beyond the required two (2) years, the more commercial experience you have the better.

The rental of farm grounds, farmhouse apartments and animal boarding would not meet the eligibility requirements. However, if such uses are accessory and in conjunction with the farm's production of an agricultural product like a specialty forage mix that is grown on the farm and had been for commercial sale for at least 2 years, then the farm would be considered eligible for Phase 1.

Question 2

The Phase 1 eligibility requirements state that I must own my farmland or be a shareholder or partner in a legal entity that owns the farmland. What constitutes a "legal entity" and "shareholder" or "partner"?

ANSWER 2 - A "legal entity" is an entity, other than an individual person, which exists in law that can function legally to make decisions through agents as in the case of corporations. Examples of a "legal entity" are: a limited liability company, a corporation, a partnership, a limited partnership, a cooperative, or a trust.

A "shareholder" is someone who owns shares in a corporation or limited liability company. A "partner" is a member of a partnership or firm, one who has joined with others to form a partnership in business. A partner may be full or limited, may share ownership of the property of a partnership, may participate in the management of the partnership, and may be responsible for its liabilities and debts. If you are not yet a shareholder or partner, but are in the process of becoming a shareholder or partner in a legal entity (an eligible Farm Business) then through that entity you may be eligible for Phase 1.

QUESTION 3

We operate a small vegetable farm and manage all aspects of the farm business—from marketing, to financial planning, to production. However, we do NOT own the farm, but rather lease all of our land. Are we eligible?

ANSWER 3 - To be eligible for Phase 1 (and Phase 2) funding, the farmland owner must be the applicant. While a lease gives you an interest in property, it does not guarantee a right of ownership in that property. You alone are not eligible. If the landowner is willing to enter into a joint ownership or long-term lease (10 year) agreement with you, AND she/he is willing to co-sign the Phase 1 application, AND both lessee and the landowner understand that both would be the recipients of the grant funds AND mutually agree to sign the grant contract stating who will do the grant work, THEN you could become eligible.

Question 4

The application asks if I have sold or donated the "development rights" on my farm. In the past, back when I bought the property, I sold some parcels that have since had houses built on them. What do you mean?

ANSWER 4 - When you sell a house lot or two, you sell your land and the right to develop it transfers to the new owner. That is different from what is meant by selling development rights.

When a landowner sells or donates their “development rights” they put a permanent restriction on their deed to the land. The restriction, often called a conservation easement, carries forward with the deed to all future owners. In terms of the Maine Farms for the Future Program, if you already have a permanent conservation easement on your farmland you are eligible and encouraged to apply for the Phase 1 – Business Plan Development grant. If you went on to apply for Phase 2 Investment Support, you would only be eligible to apply for the recommendation for the Reduced Interest (2%) Loan, and would not be eligible to apply for the Cash Grant.

Question 5

How do I find out my soil classification?

ANSWER 5 - Contact your county Soil and Water Conservation District and USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Office to request GIS maps of your farmland’s soil types which are typically classified as “*Prime Farmland*”, “*Farmland of Statewide Importance*” or “*Not Prime Farmland*” (in Androscoggin, Kennebec, Sagadahoc and York Counties there is also a classification of “*Farmland of Local Importance*”). These are busy offices and you may need to make an appointment to go into the office to work with a technician to generate this map. Go to <http://www.maineswcds.org/> to find your county office location and telephone number.

Question 6

What is the Bidder’s Conference scheduled for Tuesday, October 2, 2012, 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM, in Room 319, in the Deering Building, at 90 Blossom Lane, in Augusta, ME?

ANSWER 6 – The purpose of the Bidders’ Conference is to answer and/or field questions, clarify for potential Bidders any aspect of the RFP requirements that may be necessary and provide supplemental information to assist potential Bidders in submitting responses to the RFP. Although attendance at the Bidders’ Conference is not mandatory, it is strongly encouraged that interested Bidders attend.

Question 7

Do I submit my application in 6 individually sealed envelopes, or do I submit 6 copies of my application in one sealed envelope?

ANSWER 7 - The Bidder must send its proposal in a sealed package including **one (1) original and five (5) copies** of the complete proposal. Please clearly label the original. One electronic copy of the proposal must also be provided on CD or flash drive with the complete narrative and attachments in MS Word format. Any attachments that cannot be submitted in MS Word format may be submitted as Adobe (.pdf) files.

Submit to:

Division of Purchases

Burton M. Cross Building

111 Sewall Street, 4th Floor, 9 State House Station, Augusta ME 04333-0009

Remember all proposals are due on or before: Tuesday, October 16th, 2012, not later than 2:00 PM local time

Please:

Submit your written questions to Stephanie.gilbert@maine.gov by the deadline 5:00 PM, Thursday, September 27th.

And attend the Bidder’s Conference on Tuesday, October 2, 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM, Room 319, Deering Building, 90 Blossom Lane, Augusta, ME.

Stephanie Gilbert, Maine Farms for the Future Program – RFP Coordinator

Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry

(207) 287-7520

Stephanie.gilbert@maine.gov

Appendix D – OVERVIEW OF ELIGIBILITY, FARM SUITABILITY, SELECTION CRITERIA AND SCORING SYSTEM

ELIGIBILITY FOR PHASE 1

An applicant must own and operate a Farm Business that has been producing agricultural products commercially (selling) in the State of Maine for at least two (2) years at the time of application. The applicant must own their farmland or be a partner or shareholder in a legal entity that owns the farmland. If having recently purchased their farmland, the applicant must have had at least two years' experience operating a Farm Business elsewhere in Maine. As defined in the Rules governing the Maine Farms for the Future Program, the term "Farm Business means that the agricultural products grown or produced on a farm are being sold commercially and the farm has documentation of gross and net farm income, expenses, net worth and farm debt."

SUITABILITY OF FARMS FOR PHASE 1

The selection process for Phase 1 involves determining the likelihood that a farm's viability will be significantly increased by researching ideas for change and writing a business plan to implement some or all of those changes. "Business Plan" means a document that identifies changes in farm management practices and investments in equipment and property that would increase the profitability and net worth of the farm (vitality). A typical plan identifies ways to increase on-farm income through such methods as improved management practices, direct marketing, and value-added initiatives; and describes current operations and future plans for the business, including but not limited to sections on mission/vision, legal organization, management team, product descriptions, market research, market promotion, customer profiles, financial statements, financial analysis of planned changes in the business and long-term goals for the business.

Factors that tend to shape the FARM & FARMER'S SUITABILITY for the `Program.

- Own the farmland and are in control of land and resources that will be covered by the plan.
- Are free to make farm management decisions (i.e. there is no outstanding legal situation or family member with "veto power" that might prevent planning and decision making).
- Are committed to farming as a primary lifestyle and income source.
- Have either clear **ideas for change** or a transition they want to pursue, or a clear **sense of what needs to be changed** on the farm (for example, something they want to move **towards** or **away from**).
- May be having difficulty now, but would likely be successful if they received support to develop a written plan for changes in the farm operation.
- Would benefit greatly by learning and seeing what other similar farm operations are doing.
- Are motivated and organized and ready to meet with consultants to: investigate their idea(s) for change, conduct market research, review financials with their business counselor, and write their own business plan.
- Have a positive attitude and are willing to consider a variety of options and set goals for the future.
- Are willing to incur some risk and debt in order to change (if necessary), but are not already overburdened with debt at a level that a new business plan cannot overcome.
- Understand that Phase 1 grants are not for regular farm upkeep, operations, or standard business expansions that make no fundamental changes to the farm enterprise or vitality.


DETAILS OF PHASE 1 SELECTION CRITERIA AND SCORING SYSTEM

CRITERIA 1 - MANAGEMENT CAPACITY: The applicant's knowledge, experience and capability to successfully plan and implement changes. (Maximum Points = 20)

Related questions on the APPLICATION: 2, 4, 4a, 17-27, 31-33, 38-39.

Related questions on the SCORE SHEET:

- a. Does the farmer demonstrate the knowledge, experience and capability to plan and implement changes?
- b. Will business planning move this farm forward?
- c. Will the farmer make good use of business planning process?

LOWER SCORE 0		HIGHER SCORE 20
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The applicant does not have enough years of experience and training in farming to show that they will be able to plan and implement farm changes.• The applicant is not in control of land and resources.• The applicant's statement of purpose is not clear or realistic.• The applicant's statement of readiness for farm planning is not clear or realistic.• The applicant does not own the land they operate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The applicant's years of experience and training in farming show that the applicant is capable of judging own abilities and industry trends.• Evidence of knowledge is clear in the way the applicant describes the farm and the vision for change.• The applicant has the clearly and compellingly described why writing a business plan will help, including listing skills or knowledge they hope to gain.• The applicant has demonstrated that their family and employees are prepared to commit the time and energy required for Phase 1.• The applicant owns the land they operate.	

CRITERIA 2 - QUALITY OF IDEAS FOR CHANGE: The likelihood that the applicant’s proposed “ideas for change” and the business planning process can affect a fundamental change that will make the farm more viable. (Maximum Points = 25)

Related questions on the APPLICATION: 7-11, 28-37.

Related questions on the SCORE SHEET:

- a. Has the applicant described areas within the current farm enterprises that need improvement, and/or identified potential strategies for change towards profitability?
- b. What is the degree of transformation that the applicant is considering?
- c. Does the proposed idea appear to have potential to positively impact farm vitality?
- d. Does the proposed idea directly rely on farm production for its success?
- e. Does the applicant intend to remain in farming?


<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; align-items: center;"> <div style="text-align: left;"> LOWER SCORE 0 </div> <div style="flex-grow: 1; text-align: center;"> </div> <div style="text-align: right;"> HIGHER SCORE 25 </div> </div>		
The applicant has provided little or no information about farm revenue.	The applicant’s farm revenue information is present but incomplete or incomprehensible.	The applicant has clearly provided or attempted to provide accurate information about farm revenues.
Description of changes are incomprehensible or clearly do not fit intent of FFF program.		The applicant has identified potential strategies for change towards profitability (a clear idea for change, a clear sense of what needs to be changed, or both)
The “changes” the applicant describes are a typical operating expense (i.e. rebuild a barn and keep the business the same).	The changes the applicant describes are a standard business expansion (i.e. add a few more cows).	The applicant seeks to make a <u>fundamental</u> change that is essential to the long-term viability (i.e. adopt a new management structure, bring in transformative technology, diversify products or markets, seek fundamental production efficiencies, begin to make 100% living from farming activity)
The ideas pose a high degree of threat to profitability.	The ideas take a farm that is currently viable and make it more viable.	The ideas potentially take a farm that is not viable (can’t sustain itself, always requires outside infusion of cash or inputs, will not survive changes in markets, regulation, or dynamic business environment) and sets it on the path towards viability.
The improvements or ideas do not use products raised or grown on the farm, or rely on farm production for its success	The improvements or ideas will utilize products raised or grown on the farm in the future, but not currently	The improvements or change ideas incorporates products or services currently raised or grown on this farm
The applicant clearly does not intend to work towards viable farming as a primary activity or income source.	The applicant intends to make the farm business the primary source of income in 5 years or so.	The farm is the primary source of income and the applicant intends to remain in farming.

CRITERIA 3 - FARM FINANCIAL HEALTH AND ABILITY TO TRANSFORM: The farm's current financial position, especially the debt load, can allow change(s) towards greater farm viability. (Maximum points = 25)

Related questions on APPLICATION: 10-16, 19

Related questions on the SCORE SHEET

- Has the applicant attempted to provide clear information about gross & net income (current year and past 1 or 2 years)?
- Does farmer clearly describe the current financial condition of the business and identify debts and asset? Does farmer describe goals and attitude regarding debt and managing debt?
- How does debt level affect plans for change?

LOWER SCORE 0	 HIGHER SCORE 25
Applicant does not provide any information about debt	<p>The applicant needs help to clearly state the current financial condition of the business and identify debts and assets</p> <p>The applicant clearly states the current financial condition of the business and identifies debts and assets</p>
The farm is struggling to manage the current debt load or lack of profitability and there is low likelihood that course can be corrected with support	<p>The farm is struggling to manage the current debt load or lack of profitability and there is moderate likelihood that course can be corrected with support</p> <p>The applicant demonstrates that the farm can manage the current debt load or lack of profitability.</p> <p>The farm is struggling to manage the current debt load or lack of profitability but there is high likelihood that course can be corrected with support</p>
The applicant's preferences/attitude about debt are incompatible with proposed ideas for change and business planning will not help	<p>The applicant's preferences/attitude about debt are not compatible with proposed ideas for change but business planning will help</p> <p>The applicant's preferences/attitude about debt seem mostly compatible with proposed ideas for change; business planning will help.</p>
The current debt load is unsustainable at a level that a business plan cannot help.	<p>The debt level is not manageable now, but there is a chance that it will become manageable, with business plan help.</p> <p>The current debt load (or lack thereof) allows change towards viability.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is manageable now and will continue to be It is challenging now but likely to be manageable, with business plan help

CRITERIA 4 - PHYSICAL RESOURCE BASE: the suitability and productivity of the farmland for its intended agricultural use, the physical condition of buildings and equipment, and other assets needed to maintain and increase productivity of the farm enterprise. (Maximum Points = 20)

Related questions on APPLICATION: 2-7, 11, 35

Related questions on the SCORE SHEET

- a. Is the land good for agriculture and/or the proposed idea for changes? Are the soils classified by the USDA NRCS as Prime Farmland, Statewide Important or Locally Significant?
- b. Is the land suitable for changes/expansion in crops, pasture, or whatever the idea entails?
- c. Does the building and equipment list suggest that business planning could help transform the farm's physical resources toward long-term viability? (*i.e. Does the building and equipment list suggest that help is needed and would make a difference?*)

<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; align-items: center;"> <div style="text-align: left;"> LOWER SCORE 0 </div> <div style="flex-grow: 1; text-align: center;"> </div> <div style="text-align: right;"> HIGHER SCORE 20 </div> </div>		
The applicant does not describe their farmland.	The farmland information is partially complete.	The applicant provides evidence that the soils & water are suitable for the changes proposed, noting how much of the land is classified by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service as <i>Prime Farmland</i> or <i>Farmland of Statewide</i> or <i>Local Importance</i> .
The farmland has poor quality soils and is unsuitable for supporting the ideas for change.	The farmland is in moderate condition or somewhat suitable for the ideas for change.	The farmland is in moderate to excellent condition, and moderately or highly suitable for the proposed ideas.
The applicant does not describe farm buildings and equipment.	The applicant already has buildings and equipment and most of what is needed for the proposed ideas.	The applicant does not already have buildings and equipment or most of what they need for their proposed ideas, but acquiring it seems reasonable and realistic, and business planning would clearly help.
The farm's asset base is nonexistent or in such poor shape that change ideas or business planning will not overcome the challenges at hand.	The applicant does not have most of what is needed for their proposed ideas, and acquiring what is needed seems challenging, but business planning would help. OR, the applicant has some of what they need, but the condition is poor or marginal and they will need to improve it.	The asset base and land conditions indicate that the ideas for change offer considerable potential for improvement.

CRITERIA 5 - OTHER CONDITIONS: The degree of impact on the farmland that the business planning process would have. (Maximum Points = 10)

Related questions on the APPLICATION: 2-3, 8-9, 18, 20, 22, 25, 29, 34-37

Related questions on the SCORE SHEET

- a. What is the degree of development pressure on the acreage? Is there a high number of acres owned and/or operated
- b. Will the idea help the farm be in a position to provide more employment opportunities and/or support regional agricultural infrastructure?
- c. Is there an environmental benefit from the proposed idea?
- d. Will the idea help the farm become/remain important to the local community?

<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; align-items: center;"> <div style="text-align: left;"> LOWER SCORE 0 </div> <div style="flex-grow: 1; text-align: center;"> </div> <div style="text-align: right;"> HIGHER SCORE 10 </div> </div>		
No development pressure on the farmland.	Moderate development pressure on the farmland,	High development pressure on the farmland.
No environmental benefit from the proposed change.	Some environmental benefit from the proposed change.	High environmental benefit from the proposed change.
No regional or community benefit from the proposed change.	Some regional or community benefit from the proposed change.	High regional or community benefit from the proposed change.
Low number of total acres operated or low percentage of acres owned to acres operated.	Medium number of total acres operated or moderate percentage of acres owned to acres operated.	High number of total acres operated or high percentage of acres owned to acres operated.

Maine Farms for the Future - Phase 1 Progress Report

HIGH HILLS FARM

Phase 1 Farms are required to submit this form along with EACH submission of invoice with receipts or request for advance with purchase orders, in order to draw allocations from your Phase 1 business planning grant contract.

Farm Information

Farmer(s)' Last

Name(s): **Steph Hill**

Farm Name: **High Hills Farm**

Mailing Address: **123 High Hill Road**

Littleacres, ME

Phone1 :

XXXXXXXXXX

Phone 2:

XXXXXXXXXX

Email: XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Work Plan Overview (details from Contract - Rider A)

OVERALL IDEA: **Research and write business plan to assess the feasibility diversification of High Hills Farm**

PHASE 1 Components (including but not limited to):

- 1) pasture improvement and land clearing to expand the intensive, multi-species grazing operation;
- 2) further development of High Hill Farm's brand and market channels for "grass-fed, locally-raised/grown" lamb and beef;
- 3) continued breeding & sales Scottish Highland cattle and Icelandic sheep;
- 4) further development of market channels for fiber
- 5) investigate opportunities for more on-farm agritourism – specifically on-farm classes and workshops

Progress Report

Date:

Note the big "milestones" since your last report – met with business counselor, met with loan officer, met with architect, etc.

Note some of the key details...*What expenses are included in this request? How do these expenses relate to your Phase 1 work plan? How is the work going?*

Note any barriers you've encountered or issues you would like technical assistance with.

**Invoice
or
Request for
Advance**

High Hills Farm

123 High Hill Rd
Littleacres, ME 04000

Phone 1: (207) 123-4578
Phone 2: (207) 987-6543
Fax: (207) 123-6789
Email: hhfarm@somewhere.com

DATE:
02/06/13

INVOICE # 1
ADVANCE # NA

Bill To:

Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry
28 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04333-0028
Attention: Stephanie Gilbert

For:

Farms for the Future Grant - R12-P1
Contract #: CT 01A 2012.....
Vendor Code #:

DESCRIPTION		AMOUNT
Itemized Travel (toll slips and receipts attached)		
mileage reimbursement at \$0.44 per mile		
Lodging at GSA per diem rate for county/state/zip		
Meals, I & E at GSA per diem rates for county/state/zip		
Itemized Materials (invoices or purchase orders attached)		
Quickbooks software		
Quickbooks class		
Itemized Services (invoices or quotes attached)		
Met with crop advisor to improve pasture forage quality		
TOTAL		\$0.00
State of Maine only obligated for the amount stated in Contract # CT 01A 2012.....		

Please make all checks payable to High Hills Farm
If you have any questions concerning this invoice, contact Steph Hill at 123-4567